

ABSTRACT  
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On the evening of January 31, 1984, one of the computers at Drake University was penetrated by hackers. These individuals were not members of the Drake community and the intrusion was accomplished despite the existence of security measures and computer systems protections that were in place.

The incident at Drake is probably not important in its uniqueness nor are the circumstances which provoked the intrusion of importance here. What is important is that the event did occur; that it is considered as a serious intrusion and violation of University property, access, and trust; and that it happened despite the existence of reasonable and extensive protection measures that were in place to discourage such attempts. The latter point is particularly important. Just as our homes cannot be made totally secure and burglar proof by affordable security measures, in this day of electronic innovation and enterprise, computer security measures cannot be relied upon to stop the determined intruder. University computer systems are particularly vulnerable to such intrusions. Ready access for legitimate users must be maintained. If learning and research are to take place, university computer systems must be reasonably available, accessible and user friendly to members of the university community. If trust in the system is to be maintained, those same users must be able to be confident that the materials that they put onto the system are not subject to access and manipulation by unauthorized individuals.

As stated above, the persons involved in the computer break-in at Drake University were not members of the University community. They penetrated and used the computer system in an unauthorized manner. They exploited an essentially user friendly system and in so doing not only used computer time, a resource with some value, but of greater consequence, the result of the penetration required the expenditure of computer resources and computer center staff time, made necessary the implementation of additional and more expensive security and monitoring procedures, and created within the university community an aura of concern and doubt regarding the security of the content of personal materials stored on the computer. Because the "hackers" are not members of the university community, they are not subject to internal university sanctions. The lack of adequate and specific laws governing computer crime means that despite the loss suffered by the University and its students and faculty, and despite the addition of increased security measures, the hopes of maintaining a secure computer system are slim.

If a hacker can penetrate and roam a computer system at will, without fear of punishment, and without his or her acts being defined as criminal, this emergent and pervasive problem will continue to haunt university computer centers and computer users. This, simply put, means that the university becomes less effective in its attempt to fulfill the educational needs and demands of society. This is a serious problem.

To date, there has been a tendency, on the part of the public, to view such violations as intellectual pranksterism. This is simply not the case. The ubiquity of computers in virtually every dimension of our everyday lives underlines this point and dictates our concern. Concern, however, is not enough. University leaders must continue to assume and pursue the responsibility of providing secure computer access to legitimate users. We must be prepared to take strong measures in response to inappropriate behavior by those who are members of our user communities. That, however, is not enough. Societal definitions, deterrents, and punishments are needed to control external violators. More states must move to provide laws that define computer damage and theft as criminal acts and appropriate sanctions must be provided. In addition, given the interconnectedness of the enterprise of higher education, federal legislation to these same ends is essential. We have a problem. The problem is computer theft and damage. We feel that the problem is a serious one, one that we cannot address by ourselves. We need your help. We need legislation that will aid us in our attempts to secure and maintain a quality education for this generation of students and for generations of students to come.